

NARRATOR: Reed, Don
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: July 26, 2000
LOCATION: Boise, Idaho
PROJECT: Smokejumpers/Forest Fire Fighters

Tape

Counter	Summary
000	Introduction.
010	Reed was born in Sweet, Idaho. He spoke about his father's different jobs that all mainly dealt with the outdoors. Reed discussed an area near Idaho City that is part of the Boise National Forest.
045	Reed attended Boise High School through his junior year. He received his GED and did take some college courses. He became involved in the Forest Service in the fall of 1955. He worked on the Garden Valley ranger district pruning trees.
070	During the summer of 1956, Reed was hired as a headquarters guard on the Boise National Forest at Idaho City. Reed discussed the various jobs on the ranger district, particularly a job entitled alternate ranger.
100	Reed eventually became the alternate ranger at the age of nineteen. He talked about the difficulties in being a "kid boss." He worked at that job (in its different titles) until 1978. In 1978 he worked for the forest service in land appraisal, eventually becoming the real estate specialist. He discussed the reasons why he wanted out of the fire aspects of his job.
155	During his last months in the forest service, Reed served as acting Fire and Land Staff. He described what jobs he did under that title.
175	After retirement Reed bought a sailboat and toured the Pacific Ocean. He described the various stops on his five-year trip. He met and married his wife in the Philippines.
210	When Reed began in the forest service, he fought fire with rangers who started their careers during the 1930s as part of the CCCs (Civilian Conservation Corps). He talked about the differences in the Boise National Forest from when he began until he retired. He specifically mentioned how forest service dispatchers disbursed people to fires and how transportation and communication improved. During Reed's years in Idaho City, the forest service had smokejumpers based there, which helped fight fires in that part of the forest.

- 350 After the smokejumpers left, the Idaho City district brought in more ground crews to fight fire and to deal with the increase in Forest Service use. He discussed the cutting of the forest by edict from Washington; he also described the abuse that the forest service took from people that felt the forests were being overcut. Reed opined that people that attacked the Forest Service from all sides usually overstate their positions.
- 430 After prompting from the interviewer, Reed continued to talk about the “beating” the Forest Service took (and takes) from miners, stockmen, loggers, recreationists, environmentalists, and others. Reed felt that it is a battle for the young people to fight.
- 470 The use of tractors on the forest, particularly the small tractors, really aided the forest service in all aspects of forest management, including fire.
- 488 **END OF SIDE ONE**
TAPE ONE SIDE TWO
- 000 Reed felt the John Deere tractor with a hula dozer was worth 35 men. He described how this particular tractor did not scar the land.
- 015 Reed talked about other aspects of technology, including helicopters, improved radios, and “pumpers.” For Reed the technology was great, but people still fought the fire the same way, by digging a line around it.
- 050 Reed bought a small roto-tiller from Sears. Reed felt that machine really save time, if you could get it to the fire.
- 065 During Reed’s early years, people who lived on the Forest Service lived there year round. There were also many sawmills on the forest. Reed, and other forest service leaders, would use these people (and their equipment) to help fight fire. Reed also used brush disposal crews to help fight fire, if they needed them.
- 100 Reed talked about the controlled burn at Quartzburg in 1934. Reed had a picture of a fire taken from the baseball diamond in Placerville.
- 115 By the middle of the 1960s, the way the forest service found manpower changed. Reed talked about how the Boise dispatcher distributed people and equipment to the fires on the forest.
- 145 Reed described what he did as a fire control officer, particularly during the summer if there were multiple fires on the district. If the fire continued through the initial attack, Reed would contact the Boise dispatcher to coordinate how to attack the fire.

- 180 Reed talked about the first fire retardant drop on the Boise National Forest. He also gave his opinions on early and later uses of retardant drops. He thought the fire drops with the DC-6 really helped the ground crews fight fire.
- 240 Reed described the mental training involved in fighting a fire, both in tactics and organization. Reed talked about how one particular class really aided him in fighting fire, specifically in large or project fires.
- 275 After a few years in the forest service, Reed's job title changed from alternate ranger to fire control officer. Reed discussed how that happened and how it changed his role, his job rating, and his pay.
- 330 As fire control officer, Reed also worked with recreation on the forest. He described his recreation jobs, which included at one time working the Bogus Basin ski area. Reed also oversaw the search and rescue on the district.
- 385 Reed saw a steady increase in recreational use on the national forest. He said the building of roads and the growth of Boise aided recreation. Fire, according to Reed, subsidized recreation. He explained how that occurred.
- 415 The Forest Service worked under a "10 a.m. Policy" from the 1930s to the 1970s. Reed discussed this policy and how he attacked every fire under that policy and what he did if a fire was not contained by 10 a.m. He also explained the reason why 10 a.m. was the time to contain a fire.
- 478 **END OF TAPE ONE**
END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Baker, Robert "Spike"
Barber Flat (Idaho)
Bogus Basin Ski Area (Idaho)
Boise National Forest
Boise River
Cascade, Idaho
Caves, Fern
Chenoweth, Bob
Chenoweth, Jack
Chenoweth, Roy
Civilian Conservation Corps
Cow Creek (Idaho)
Emmett, Idaho
Flock, K.D.
Garden Valley, Idaho
High Valley, Idaho
Horseshoe Bend, Idaho
Idaho City, Idaho
Kusick (?), Jack (forest ranger at Garden Valley)
Lowman, Idaho
Maughn (?), Ed
Miller, Jack
Mills, Ike
Palmer, Slim
Quartzburg, Idaho
Rabbit Creek (Idaho)
Stover, James "Smoky"
Sweet, Idaho
United States Forest Service

NARRATOR: Reed, Don
INTERVIEWER: Troy Reeves
DATE: August 31, 2000
LOCATION: Boise, Idaho
PROJECT: Smokejumpers/Forest Fire Fighters

Tape

Counter	Summary
000	Introduction.
010	Reed began with his thoughts about aerial drops of cargo. Improvements in cargo drops from airplanes and helicopters helped the people who fought fire.
035	Improvements in saws, particularly chainsaws, helped all aspects of forest work, including fighting fire. Reed also talked about how they fought fire before adequate communications and chainsaws.
090	During the 1950s and early 1960s, Reed still used manual crosscut saws. By the middle 1960s, they used chainsaws. Reed talked about how the chainsaw helped a fire fighter clear the fire line.
115	When Reed was the fire control officer, he was on call all day and all night. He described how people in the forest could contact him whenever they needed to and how changes in technology freed Reed by allowing him to be more mobile.
140	During the first interview, Reed discussed his opinions about air tankers. He clarified his opinions about tanker drops on the forest. He explained how the annual budget set-up helped to pay for the retardant drops and helicopter use during fire season. Reed talked about a couple of specific helicopter pilots.
190	Reed explained how government created the forest service budget each year, specifically in terms of fighting fire. Reed called this specific budget line a "FF fund," which stood for "Fire Fighting Fund."
210	By the 1970s fire fighters in the forest service developed a universal language to describe fires and the weather. Reed thought that other agencies developed similar fire lexicon to talk within their group and to each other. This standard language helped forest fire fighters, specifically supervisors.
230	Being on call "24-7" affected family life. Reed felt that families suffered because summer was the time that kids were out of school and other families took vacations.

- 255 Reed said he felt loyal to the forest service, because he grew up in the Depression. So, when they (people who grew up during the Depression) got a job, they kept it.
- 270 In his early years, Reed was a fire guard. He chased smoke (fought fire) during the summer. Reed, in his early working years, was a seasonal employee for the Forest Service. He worked for the Service on a ten-month appointment. He “starved to death” on his two months away from the Forest Service, waiting to be rehired.
- 325 During his time at Idaho City as the fire control officer, Reid tried to keep track of people who could help fight fire during the summer. The forest service built structures to house employees or possible employees. Reid found it difficult to separate the landlord aspects of his job from the fire supervising aspects of the job.
- 380 Reed lived in Idaho City, Idaho, during the 1950s through the 1970s. He described the people who lived in Idaho City during his time there. In the early years, Reed felt that there were three types of people in 1950s: loggers, Forest Service employees, and the “old-timers,” who were people born and raised there.
- 460 By the 1970s Reed saw the town as a bedroom community of Boise, and there were a younger crowd in the town. Reed felt that the old-timers enjoyed Idaho City, because they enjoyed the sunshine and they handled the winters.
- 500 **END OF SIDE ONE**
TAPE ONE SIDE TWO
- 000 Reed described what a fire control officer did during non-fire time. One aspect was building structures; Reed felt that building things during his time as a fire control officer lead to his current interest in building.
- 025 Part of Reed’s job included recreation. This job included work on the forest land where Bogus Basin ski area resides. He explained how the forest service worked with the ski resort to help protect the forest and the people.
- 055 The forest service helped or ran search and rescue expeditions during non-fire season. Reed explained why the forest service did that and what other agencies (local sheriffs or state search and rescue teams) assisted or also ran search and rescue jobs.

- 080 Reed offered his opinions about the, now, National Interagency Fire Center. Reid felt he did not see any real noticeable difference, except the smokejumpers moved from Idaho City to Boise. Reed always received the number of smokejumpers or fire material that he asked for during a project fire. Reed watched the NIFC grow from afar.
- 140 Reed remembered 1960 as a bad fire year. He described the physical conditions that led to the 1960 fire year. He fought fire in his district, but he also went to other states to help with their fires.
- 170 Reed held the titles “class one fire boss, class two line boss.” He clarified what these titles meant and how he earned these credentials. He also talked about the difference between college-educated forest service employees and non-college-educated forest service employees in terms of moving up the job ladder.
- 215 Reed took classes in college, but they were not in fire-related topics. He took classes to fill a void in his personal education. The forest service classes trained Reed well. He told a story about how a former supervisor, K.D. Flock, told Reed that Reed was one of the most educated people in the forest service, even though he never received an official college degree.
- 260 According to Reed there was a tension between those with degrees and those without. Reed detailed how certain assistant rangers who came in from college felt they were Reed’s superiors. The forest service itself created organizational problems that occasionally caused this tension between employees.
- 315 Reed described the difference among a crew size fire, a section size fire, and a division fire. In terms of what constituted a large fire, Reed said that a fire control officer made those judgments when they initially scoped a fire. He knew about what equipment and crew each fire needed. When a fire sustained itself through an initial attack, it became a project fire, and Reed asked for the needed material to fight it.
- 385 In terms of big project fires, Reed felt that each big fire had its own unique set of circumstances. The stress from a multi-day fire would cause a large amount of stress and nightmares after the fire was contained. When Reed left fire, he never wanted to live on adrenaline again, such as he did when he fought a big project fire.
- 430 The year 2000 has seen dozen of project fires in Idaho and Montana. Reed fought large (50,000 to 100,000 acres) in Nevada and California, and he felt calm when he began to fight a large fire, because excitement did not help him. Roy Chenoweth, a former Forest Service employee, and

Slim Palmer, a dispatcher with the Boise National Forest, both claimed that when the physical and weather conditions are right (hot and dry) a fire can burn all summer, such as the fires that have burned during the summer of 2000.

500 **END OF TAPE ONE**
 TAPE TWO SIDE ONE

000 Introduction.

005 Reed said the dry conditions, dry fuels, low humidity, and high temperature in the summer of 2000 has lead to this major fire season in terms of number of fires and acreage of fires. Reed explained what man has done to add to these big fire years.

025 Reed did a lot of prescribed burning on his district. He burned around 2,000 acres a year, and he learned what not to do. He described what things he learned, and why he burned in the fall and not in the spring. Reed felt that burning in the fall did not meet with the current standard operating procedure, but he felt that it worked.

080 After twenty-plus years in fire, Reed knew how the forest in his district would burn. Burning in the fall, according to Reed, would cause a major amount of smoke in the valley during the fall. He gave his opinions on the proscribed burn in the spring of 2000 that lead to a major fire near Los Alamos, New Mexico. Reed felt that they should burn between 100,000 and 200,000 acres in the Boise National Forest. This proscribed burn would teach the forest service about fire and would help decrease the possibility of a large fire season.

140 With prompting from the interviewer, Reed described the importance of knowing the weather before prescribing a burn on the forest. This idea runs parallel to preventive medicine.

165 A change in weather (increased humidity and moisture and lower temperature) will change the fire. Reed and interviewer described how weather fits into the "fire triangle" of heat, fuel, and oxygen.

185 When Reed served as a headquarters guard in the early 1950s, he used his feet and truck to get to the fire. Reed was a young man, then, and he felt proud to fight fires and control them quickly. He explained how he learned about the location of the fire and what equipment he took to fight the fire or fires in the district.

235 Reed explained the importance of lookouts in fighting fires and the reason why the forest service hired married couples to work at lookouts.

255 Reed clarified some points of the first interview with Reeves. He talked about why he quit high school and what jobs he worked at after leaving high school. He also described why he did not fit in the United States after he returned from his five-year voyage through the Pacific Ocean. The amount of paperwork when he returned to Idaho almost overwhelmed him.

325 Reed continued to describe his opinions about the United States in the late 1990s/early 2000s.

370 Reed has readjusted to life in the United States, but he felt that other places, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, live a freer life. He offered his opinions about governmental elections and current law enforcement practices in Idaho.

455 Reed felt that his time fighting fire provided him an education. When he left fire, he never returned to fighting fire, even on a part-time basis. From fighting fire he learned organizational skills.

495 **END OF SIDE ONE**
TAPE TWO SIDE TWO

000 The peripheral issues from working at the Forest Service, including electrical, carpentry, money management, real estate, helped Reed in his later life.

025 **END OF SIDE TWO**
END OF INTERVIEW

NAMES AND PLACES INDEX

Bogus Basin Ski Resort (Idaho)
Boise, Idaho
Caves, Fern
Chenoweth, Roy
Cow Creek (Idaho)
Flock, K.D.
Garden Valley, Idaho
Idaho City, Idaho
Larkin, Jim
Los Alamos, New Mexico
Moncrief, Ellis
National Interagency Fire Center (Boise, Idaho)
Palmer, Slim
Reeder, Charlie
Shafer Butte (Idaho)
United States Forest Service